

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
AID-05 HA-05 /078 W  
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P R 041230Z AUG 78

FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8541  
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO  
AMCONSUL SAO PAULO  
AMEMBASSY ASUNCION  
AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
AMEMBASSY LIMA  
AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO  
AMEMBASSY QUITO  
AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 3 BRASILIA 6114

EO 11652 GDS  
TAGS PINT BR  
SUBJECT: THE POLITICAL SETTING AS CONGRESS RECONVENES

REF BRASILIA 5005

1. SUMMARY: ITS TRADITIONAL JULY RECESS NOW OVER, THE CONGRESS WILL IN COMING WEEKS BE THE FOCUS OF NATIONAL POLITICAL ATTENTION AS IT WRESTLES WITH COMPETING AND CONFLICTING CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM AMENDMENTS. IT WILL SHARE THE SPOTLIGHT, HOWEVER, WITH BOTH OFFICIAL AND PROSPECTIVE PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES, THE ANTICIPATED APPROVAL BY THE VARIOUS STATE ELECTORAL COLLEGES OF PREVIOUSLY DESIGNATED CONFIDENTIAL

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CANDIDATES FOR GOVERNOR, VICE-GOVERNOR, AND "BIONIC" SENATORS, AND THE INTERPLAY OF OTHER FACTORS SLOWLY CONTRIBUTING TO THE MOMENTUM OF THE EVOLVING POLITICAL PROCESS, E.G., INCREASINGLY ACTIVE LABOR ELEMENTS, RETURN OF EXILES. AUGUST IS A MONTH OF DIRE PORTENT IN BRAZILIAN POLITICAL MYTHOLOGY--GETULIO VARGAS COMMITTED SUICIDE AND JANIO QUADROS RESIGNED DURING AUGUST. ALTHOUGH THERE ARE VERY FEW CASSANDRAS THIS YEAR, THE MONTH DOES PROMISE TO BE NOT

ONLY A VERY POLITICALLY ACTIVE ONE BUT ALSO THE STAGE-SETTER FOR MANY MONTHS TO COME. THESE WILL WITNESS THE INDIRECT GUBERNATORIAL ELECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 1; THE INDIRECT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION ON OCTOBER 15; THE HOTLY CONTESTED CONGRESSIONAL ELECTIONS ON NOVEMBER 15; THE COMING INTO EFFECT OF PRESIDENT GEISEL'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PACKAGE ON JANUARY 1, 1979 (OR PERHAPS SOONER); AND THE INAUGURATION OF THE NEXT PRESIDENT ON MARCH 15, 1979.  
END SUMMARY.

2. THE CONGRESS DURING AUGUST (AND PROBABLY MOST OF SEPTEMBER AS WELL) WILL BE SEIZED PRIMARILY WITH DEBATING AND APPROVING GEISEL'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PACKAGE (REFTEL). IT WILL ALSO BE CONSIDERING COMPETING AND PERHAPS CONFLICTING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROPOSALS OFFERED BY BOTH THE MDB AND, IF AUGURIES ARE CORRECT, BY A FEW ARENA DISSIDENTS. THE MAJOR MDB PROPOSAL OFFERED SO FAR WAS SUBMITTED BY FORMER MDB SENATE LEADER FRANCO MONTORO AT THE END OF JUNE; IF PASSED (AND FOR PASSAGE IT NEEDS THE VOTES OF THE FULL MDB CONTINGENT PLUS 37 ARENA DISSIDENTS), IT WOULD VOID THE INDIRECT ELECTION PROVISION (FOR GOVERNORS AND "BIONIC" SENATORS) OF GEISEL'S APRIL 1977 "REFORM" PACKAGE AND THOROUGHLY UPSET GOB POLITICAL PLANNING THROUGH THE REMAINDER OF THIS YEAR. ADDITIONAL MDB SUBMISSIONS, GOING FAR BEYOND BOTH GEISEL'S JUNE PROPOSALS AND THAT OF MONTORO, ARE STILL BEING HEATEDLY DEBATED WITHIN THE PARTY FOR POSSIBLE PRESENTATION TO THE CONGRESS NEXT WEEK. EQUALLY FARREACHING SUBMISSIONS ARE ALSO BEING CONSIDERED BY TWO OR THREE OF THE MORE LIBERAL ARENA DISSIDENTS.

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3. DURING THE JULY RECESS, THE ADMINISTRATION AND THE ARENA LEADERSHIP DEVOTED THEMSELVES TO INTENSE LOBBYING AND ARM-TWISTING IN SUPPORT OF GEISEL'S PACKAGE AND IN OPPOSITION TO THE MONTORO AMENDMENT. CONCERN OVER THE LATTER, EXPRESSED BOTH PUBLICLY (AND PRIVATELY TO THE EMBASSY) BY ARENA LEADERS IN LATE JUNE, DISSIPATED DURING JULY AND IT NOW APPEARS THAT A BARGAIN MAY HAVE BEEN STRUCK-- AN AGREEMENT TO LIMIT THE EIGHT-YEAR TERM OF THE "BIONIC" SENATORS TO FOUR, OR EVEN TWO, YEARS IN RETURN FOR SHELVING THE MDB AMENDMENT. GEISEL, FIGUEIREDO, THE ARENA LEADERSHIP AND ALL OTHER POLITICAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO THE REGIME HAVE ALSO BEEN WORKING HARD TO ASSURE FIGUEIREDO THE MAXIMUM POSSIBLE VOTE IN

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P R 041230Z AUG 78  
FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
TO SECSTATE WAHSDC PRIORITY 8542  
INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO  
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AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
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THE OCTOBER 15 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION (BY THE NATIONAL CONGRESS  
AUGMENTED BY STATE AND PARTY DELEGATIONS). GOB CONCERN OVER SIGNI-  
FICANT NUMBERS OF ARENA DISSIDENTS VOTING FOR AN OPPOSITION CANDIDATE

--  
OR NOT VOTING AT ALL--HAS ALSO DISSIPATED SOMEWHAT. AMONG OTHER MEA-  
SURES, ARENA HAS INVOKED THE PARTY DISCIPLINE CLAUSE FOR THE ELECTION

,  
I.E., RENISTAS VOTING AGAINST OR NOT VOTING ARE SUBMITTED TO ACTION  
INCLUDING EXPULSION FROM THE PARTY, LOSS OF ELECTED MANDATE,  
WITHDRAWAL OF LOCAL POLITICAL SUPPORT, ETC. SINCE A NUMBER OF  
ARENISTAS  
FACE LOSS OF THEIR CONGRESSIONAL SEATS ANYWAY, AND NEW PARTIES ARE  
EXPECTED TO COME INTO EFFECT NEXT YEAR, THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THIS  
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MEASURE WILL REMAIN OPEN TO QUESTION UNTIL ELECTION DAY.

4. AMONG OTHER RESOURCES, GEISEL HAS ALSO BROUGHT THE WEIGHT OF  
THE ARMY HIGH COMMAND TO BEAR ON THE SITUATION. FOLLOWING ITS  
LATEST REGULAR MEETING IN BRASILIA LAST WEEK, THE HIGH COMMAND  
TOOK THE UNUSUAL STEP OF ISSUING A STATEMENT NOTING THAT THE MEET-  
ING HAD CONSIDERED "PUBLIC DECLARATIONS OF A POLITICAL NATURE THAT  
PRETENDED TO INTERPRET THE SENTIMENT OF THE ARMY AND TO FOCUS IT  
ON A CERTAIN COURSE OF ACTION." (THIS WAS IN REFERENCE TO A RECENT

STATEMENT BY RETIRED GENERAL EULER GENTES MONTEIRO TO THE EFFECT THAT HIS POTENTIAL PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDACY REFLECTED A WIDESPREAD MILITARY DESIRE TO WITHDRAW FROM THE POLITICAL PROCESS). THE HIGH COMMAND AFFIRMED THAT THE ARMY REMAINS "UNITED AND COHESIVE" BEHIND THE GOALS OF THE 1964 REVOLUTION AND ITS CURRENT LEADERSHIP (I.E., GEISEL AND, BY EXTENSION, HIS DESIGNATED SUCCESSOR). HAVING THUS WRAPPED BOTH THE PARTY AND THE ARMY AROUND FIGUEIREDO, THE GOB IS NOW GEARED TO DO (FIGURATIVE) BATTLE WITH THE MDB IN CONGRESS WITH DIMINISHED CONCERN OVER DISSIDENCE IN PARTY RANKS.

5. THE MDB DEVOTED ITSELF DURING JULY TO TRYING TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO ABOUT: (A) THE FRONT FOR REDEMOCRATIZATION; (B) GEISEL'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PROPOSALS; AND (C) THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION. IT HAS SO FAR COME TO NO FIRM CONCLUSIONS ON ANY OF THESE. WITH REGARD TO THE FIRST ISSUE, THE MDB HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTING--ALBEIT RATHER LAMELY--THE JUNE 23 DECISION OF ITS NATIONAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE TO SUPPORT THE REDEMOCRATIZATION FRONT. LEADING MDB FIGURES--ALTHOUGH NOT, EXCEPT ON TWO OCCASIONS, THE PARTY'S NATIONAL LEADERSHIP--HAVE ATTENDED FRONT RALLIES IN SAO PAULO, MANAUS, RECIFE, CURITIBA AND ONE OR TWO OTHER MINOR EVENTS. THE FRONT, HOWEVER, HAS YET TO BECOME A VIABLE, COHESIVE MECHANISM THROUGH WHICH TO CHANNEL POLITICAL EXPRESSION AND IT HAS NOT GAINED EITHER THE SERIOUS ATTENTION OR THE PUBLIC SUPPORT OF MUCH OF THE BODY POLITIC. IT HAS BEEN USEFUL IN KEEPING ISSUES AND THE

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NAME OF GENERAL BENTES MONTEIRO BEFORE THE PUBLIC, BUT IT HAS NOT GAINED THE HOPED-FOR ADHERENCE THOSE CIVILIAN ORGANIZATIONS THAT WOULD GIVE IT THE SUBSTANCE NECESSARY FOR IT TO BE TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY (OR TO BECOME THE SERIOUS CONCERN OF) THE REGIME, E.G., THE BRAZILIAN BAR ASSOCIATION (OAB), THE BRAZILIAN PRESS ASSOCIATION (ABI), THE NATIONAL COUNCIL OF BRAZILIAN BISHOPS (CNBB), ETC. THE FRONT HAS SUFFERED FURTHER IN THE LAST TWO WEEKS BECAUSE OF A CLEAR PARTING OF THE WAYS BETWEEN BENTES MONTEIRO AND STANDFAST PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE MAGALHAES PINTO (RIO 3271). THEIR VERY TEMPORARY MARRIAGE OF CONVENIENCE IN JUNE ENCOURAGED THE EMOTIONAL LEFT WING OF THE MDB TO FORCE, FOR THE SAKE OF APPARENT PARTY UNITY, MDB SUPPORT FOR THE FRONT, AN ACTION WITH WHICH THE MODERATE PARTY LEADERSHIP THOROUGHLY (AND IN PART PUBLICLY) DISAGREED. BENTES MONTEIRO AND MAGALHAES PINTO, FAR FROM COLLABORATING, HAVE BEEN ENGAGING IN INTENSE COMPETITION FOR THE MDB PRESIDENTIAL NOMINATION (IF THERE IS TO BE ONE). EACH HAS RECENTLY REFUSED TO SUPPORT THE OTHER IN THE EVENT HE IS NOMINATED; BENTES MONTEIRO QUITE HUFFILY REJECTED THE PROSPECT OF BEING MAGALHAES PINTO'S VICE-PRESIDENTIAL RUNNING MATE, AND MAGALHAES PINTO SAID RECENTLY THAT HE HAD LITTLE MORE TO SAY TO "THAT GENERAL".

6. EMBROILED IN THIS DILEMMA--WHAT TO DO ABOUT THE FRONT--THE MDB IS ALSO TRYING TO DECIDE HOW TO DEAL WITH GEISEL'S CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM PACKAGE NEXT WEEK. THERE IS SENTIMENT--WHICH THE

LEADERSHIP DOES NOT SHARE--FOR OPTING OUT OF THE DEBATE AND,  
PRESUMABLY, THE VOTE ALTOGETHER UNLESS GEISEL IS PREPARED TO ACCEPT  
SUBSTANTIVE MODIFICATION OF SOME OF HIS PROPOSALS--PARTICULARLY  
THOSE CONCERNING THE "MEASURES AND STATE OF EMERGENCY". THE  
PARTY LEADERSHIP HAS LONG BELIEVED THAT HALF A LOAF IS BETTER THAN  
NONE, AND DOES NOT WANT TO RISK LOSING SOME OF WHAT HAS ALREADY  
BEEN OFFERED.

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FM AMEMBASSY BRASILIA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8543

INFO AMCONSUL RIO DE JANEIRO

AMCONSUL SAO PAULO

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NEITHER DOES IT WANT TO BEAR THE ONUS OF THE PARTY BEING LEFT OUT IN THE COLD. IT IS THE GENERAL BELIEF HERE THAT GEISEL FULLY INTENDS TO IMPLEMENT HIS REFORM PROPOSALS--WITH OR WITHOUT THE COOPERATION OF THE MDB. IF HIS WORK WITH DISSIDENT ARENTAS HAS IN FACT BEEN SUCCESSFUL, HE WOULD EASILY HAVE THE REQUISITE ARENA VOTES IN CONGRESS FOR THE APPROVAL OF HIS PACKAGE BY SIMPLE MAJORITY. IN AN EXTREME SITUATION, I.E., SHOULD HIS WORK WITH DISSIDENTS NOT HAVE BEEN SUFFICIENTLY SUCCESSFUL BY THE TIME (PROBABLY SOME SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS FROM NOW) THE PACKAGE IS PUT TO A VOTE, GEISEL COULD DECREE THE REFORMS UNDER INSTITUTIONAL ACT NO.5 (AS HE DID, FOR VERY DIFFERENT PURPOSES, IN APRIL 1977). THE IRONY OF THIS PROSPECT HAS BEEN LOST ON NO ONE: GEISEL WOULD BE USING

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IA-5 FOR THE LAST TIME FOR THE PURPOSE OF DOING AWAY WITH IT. ARENA LEADERS AND OTHERS REPORTEDLY PRIVY TO THE PRESIDENT'S THINKING, HOWEVER, STATE THAT HE WOULD GREATLY PREFER A HEALTHY AFFIRMATIVE VOTE IN THE CONGRESS THAT WOULD INCLUDE AS MANY MEMBERS OF THE MDB AS POSSIBLE. TO A CONSIDERABLE DEGREE BUT FOR DIFFERENT MOTIVES, THE MDB LEADERSHIP ALSO BELIEVES THAT THE PARTY SHOULD ASSOCIATE ITSELF WITH THE REFORM PROCESS TO THE EXTENT POSSIBLE, PROVIDING SOME COMPROMISE ON "EMERGENCY" MEASURES CAN BE REACHED.

7. WITH REGARD TO THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION, THE MDB IS SPLIT THREE WAYS: BETWEEN THOSE WHO WANT TO NOMINATE A CANDIDATE, THOSE WHO DO NOT, AND THOSE WHO WOULD SETTLE FOR AN "ANTI-CANDIDATE" AS IN 1973, WHEN PARTY PRESIDENT ULYSSES GUIMARAES WAS DESIGNATED TO SPEAK FOR A UNITED OPPOSITION WITHOUT FORMALLY CONTESTING GEISEL'S CANDIDACY IN THE ELECTORAL COLLEGE. THE PARTY IS FURTHER SPLIT, OF COURSE, OVER WHO THE CANDIDATE (OR "ANTI-CANDIDATE") WOULD BE IF ONE IS NOMINATED. IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS POINT TO ESTIMATE THE RELATIVE CHANCES OF BENETES MONTEIRO AND MAGALHAES PINTO, ALTHOUGH THE LATTER IS THE APPARENT CHOICE OF THE PARTY LEADERSHIP. TO BECOME THE MDB'S CANDIDATE, HOWEVER (IN ADDITION TO BEING CHOSEN BY THE PARTY), MAGALHAES MUST FIRST OVERCOME A LEGAL OBSTACLE--ELECTORAL LEGISLATION AS CURRENTLY INTERPRETED BARS A MEMBER OF EITHER PARTY FROM BEING A CANDIDATE FOR THE OTHER UNTIL TWO YEARS AFTER RENUNCIATION OF MEMBERSHIP IN HIS FORMER PARTY. WITHIN THE LAST FEW DAYS, MAGALHAES HAS PRESENTED TO THE MDB LEADERSHIP A LEGAL OPINION WHICH IS SAID TO AFFIRM HIS ELIGIBILITY.

THE LEFT WING OF THE PARTY, HOWEVER, IS BECOMING INCREASINGLY VOCAL IN SUPPORT OF BENTES MONTEIRO, WHO IS NOT SUBJECT TO THIS LEGAL DISABILITY.

8. MEANWHILE, GENERAL FIGUEIREDO TOOK CONSIDERABLE PAINS DURING  
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JULY TO CAMPAIGN OPENLY AND TO DEVELOP AND PROJECT A POPULAR IMAGE--SOMETHING NONE OF HIS PREDECESSORS SINCE 1964 HAVE DONE. HE SPENT CONSIDERABLE TIME TESTING DIFFERENT APPROACHES IN HIS HOME TOWN (RIO DE JANEIRO), APPEARS TO HAVE LEARNED FROM EARLIER MISTAKES (SUCH AS HIS EXCEPTIONALLY CANDID BEHAVIOR WITH THE PRESS DURING THE FIRST MONTHS OF 1978), AND IS DEVELOPING A RATHER FOLKSY MANNER DELIBERATELY INTENDED TO DILUTE--OR AT LEAST TO MASK--THE AUTHORITARIAN DEMEANOR THAT SEEMS NATURAL TO HIM. A SEPARATE MESSAGE WILL ADDRESS THIS ASPECT OF THE CAMPAIGN.

9. SEPARATE MESSAGES ARE ALSO UNDER PREPARATION ON DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LABOR FIELD AND CONCERNING THE RETURN TO BRAZIL OF SOME OF THOSE POLITICAL FIGURES WHO EITHER COSE OR WERE FORCED INTO EXILE AT ONE TIME OR ANOTHER SINCE 1964. SO FAR AS WE CAN DETERMINE, NONE OF THE RETURNEES HAS BEEN HARASSED OR THREATENED AND, EXCEPT FOR SOME QUESTIONING BY POLICE, THEY HAVE BEEN FREE TO PURSUE PERSONAL ACTIVITIES OF THEIR CHOICE.

10. THE ABOVE, THEN, SETS THE STAGE FOR A PERIOD THAT WILL BE OF CONSIDERABLE SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE FUTURE COURSE OF BRAZIL'S POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT. THE ANSWERS TO MOST IF NOT ALL OF THE QUESTIONS POSED IN THIS MESSAGE WILL COME WITH INCREASING RAPIDITY AS THE NEXT FEW MONTHS UNFOLD, AND ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS OF PERHAPS EQUAL SERIOUSNESS WILL ARISE AS WELL. HERE IS, HOWEVER, GENERAL AGREEMENT THAT WHATEVER HAPPENS AND HOWEVER IT TAKES PLACE, BRAZIL IS ENTERING A PERIOD DIFFERENT FROM ANY IT HAS EXPERIENCED SINCE 1964, AND WHOSE OUTCOME WILL DETERMINE THE COURSE OF ITS POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT FOR YEARS TO COME.

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